

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0172

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 18457

LIMDIS
FOR AF ONLY
FOR MOOSE AND HARROP FROM SCHWARTZSTEIN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ET SO PDEV
SUBJECT: A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE HORN OF AFRICA

1. AS I MENTIONED A FEW DAYS AGO ON THE TELEPHONE, AS SOMETHING OF A FOLLOW-UP TO THE SHORT PAPER I DID ON THE HORN A FEW WEEKS AGO, I HAVE PUT DOWN A FEW MORE THOUGHTS. I HOPE THEY WILL BE OF SOME USE IN CONSIDERING THE PROBLEM.

2. I HAVE NOT CHANGED IN MY FEELING THAT A RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT IN THE HORN--THAT IS, A RESOLUTION WHICH WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO US--IS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE IF WE CONTINUE TO PLACE THE REGION SOLELY IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT. DETACHING IT FROM ITS AFRICAN AND OAU DEFINITIONS WOULD ENABLE US TO UTILIZE A NUMBER OF FRESH APPROACHES TO THE CONFLICT (OR, MORE PRECISELY, CONFLICTS, PLURAL). WHILE SEVERAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES MIGHT RESIST THIS IDEA AT FIRST, THEY PROBABLY COULD BE PERSUADED OF IT, AND THAT SOME MIGHT EVEN BE RELIEVED BY IT. AMBASSADOR LOUGHRAN'S SUGGESTION AND THE IDEA ADVANCED BY THE DJIBOUTI PRIME MINISTER OF AN OAU-ARAB LEAGUE EFFORT LEAD IN THIS DIRECTION. TAKING THE HORN OUT OF AN

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AFRICAN STRAITJACKET IS IMPORTANT NOT JUST FOR THE DISPUTE OVER THE OGADEN, BUT ERITREA, THE NORTHERN FRONTIER DISTRICT OF KENYA, AND DJIBOUTI, AS WELL AS FOR OTHER PROBLEMS WHICH COULD (AND PROBABLY WILL) EMERGE.

3. WHATEVER OPINIONS MIGHT BE CONCERNING THE ULTIMATE SHAPE OF THE HORN, MY IMPRESSION IS THAT THE TIME IS

NOW RIPE FOR A CEASE-FIRE IN THE OGADEN, WITH LINES DRAWN PRETTY MUCH AS THEY ARE NOW. THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS FOR THIS: 1) THE AREAS NOW HELD BY THE SOMALIS SEEM TO COINCIDE RATHER CLOSELY WITH THOSE AREAS WITH A MAJORITY OF ETHNIC SOMALIS, 2) THE ETHIOPIANS STILL HOLD HARAR AND DIRE DAWA WHICH ARE IMPORTANT TO THEM NOT JUST FOR MILITARY REASONS, BUT FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL REASONS AND 3) ANY ALTERING OF THE PRESENT STANDOFF WOULD RESULT IN MAJOR CHANGES IN THE REGION, NOT JUST IN TERMS OF THE MILITARY BALANCE AND CONTROL OF TERRITORY, BUT IN THE INTERNAL SITUATION OF GOVERNMENTS IN BOTH MOGADISCIO AND ADDIS. THUS, I BELIEVE THAT BOTH MENGISTU AND SIAD BARRE, REALIZING THAT THEIR OWN POSITIONS HANG IN THE BALANCE, WOULD BE FAR MORE AMENABLE TO A CEASE-FIRE AT THIS TIME THAN THEY MIGHT LATER--IF BOTH SURVIVE THE CRISIS. THE BRITISH, TOO, SEEM NOW TO BE THINKING OF SOME SORT OF EFFORT FOR A CEASE-FIRE.

4. HOWEVER DIFFICULT THE OGADEN DISPUTE MAY BE TO RESOLVE, THE PROBLEM OF ERITREA IS PROBABLY GOING TO PRESENT EVEN MORE DIFFICULTIES. I USED TO THINK THAT SOME SORT OF AUTONOMY FOR ERITREA WOULD BE POSSIBLE, BUT I AM NOT AT ALL CERTAIN NOW THAT IT WOULD HAVE A CHANCE OF WORKING--THE ERITREANS IT SEEMS WOULD NOT ACCEPT PARTIAL INDEPENDENCE. AND THEY CAN POINT OUT, CORRECTLY, THAT THEY HAD A GOOD DEAL OF AUTONOMY IN THE SECRET

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PAST, AND IT WAS TAKEN AWAY FROM THEM IN 1962 BY HAILE SELASSIE. GIVEN ARAB SUPPORT FOR THE ERITREANS, AND GIVEN APPARENT ERITREAN INTRANSIGENCE, THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE SITUATION WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO RESOLVE, AND WILL NECESSITATE MORE SKILLFUL DEALING THAN THE OGADEN DISPUTE. PERHAPS THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH A ROLE SHOULD BE PLAYED BY THE WESTERN POWERS IS IN HELPING TO MAKE THIS INEVITABLE (AS I SEE IT) TRANSITION AN EASY ONE, AND USING ITS INFLUENCE TO PREVENT A LEFTIST, ANTI-WESTERN GOVERNMENT FROM ESTABLISHING ITSELF IN ERITREA. I HAVE LESS FEAR THAN I DID EARLIER THAT THE SOVIETS WILL BE ABLE TO CLEVERLY AND DEFTLY ARRANGE A MODUS VIVENDI ACCEPTABLE TO ETHIOPIANS AND ERITREANS--THEY SEEM TOO HEAVY-HANDED AND SEEM ONLY TO KNOW HOW TO PROVIDE WEAPONRY. NONETHELESS, THEY DO HAVE THE ABILITY TO DO A GOOD DEAL OF DAMAGE. PRIMARILY, I SEE THEM AS BOLSTERING MENGISTU'S REGIME, AND IN EXCHANGE FOR HELP IN MAINTAINING THE DERGUE'S CONTROL

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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 18457

LIMDIS FOR AF ONLY

OVER ALL OF ETHIOPIA, INCLUDING ERITREA, EXACTING CONCESSIONS. EVEN WERE THE WESTERN POWERS TO INDICATE TO ETHIOPIA THAT IT SHOULD REMAIN WITH TERRITORY INVIOLEATE, GIVEN THAT ARMS ARE COMING ONLY FROM THE SOVIETS AND THE CUBANS (WITH HELP FROM THE LIBYANS, PDRY AND THE ISRAELIS), THEY HAVE LITTLE CHOICE OF ALLIES.

5. AS I PERCEIVE THE SITUATION FOR THE WEST, THERE IS ONE MAJOR PROBLEM, AND A NUMBER OF LESSER PROBLEMS IN THE HORN. THAT MAJOR PROBLEM IS SOVIET (AND CUBAN) INVOLVEMENT. LESS SIGNIFICANT ARE THE REGIONAL CONFLICTS OVER TERRITORY, BORDERS, GRAZING RIGHTS, ETC.

6. I AM NOT AT ALL CONVINCED THAT THE SOVIETS WILL LOSE, HAVING ARMED BOTH SIDES, BUT I SUSPECT THAT THEY ARE MORE THAN EVER ANXIOUS TO GAIN A STRONG FOOTHOLD IN THE REGION, AND WILL RAISE THE ANTE IF NECESSARY TO REMAIN THERE. THE IDEA, THEREFORE, THAT WE SHOULD SIMPLY LET THE SOVIETS "STEW IN THEIR OWN JUICES" DOES NOT SEEM TO ME TO BE A PRACTICAL APPROACH.

7. AND TO A CONSIDERABLE EXTENT CUBAN INVOLVEMENT POSES THE SAME PROBLEM IN THE HORN AS IT DID IN ANGOLA, AND PERHAPS CUBAN INVOLVEMENT HERE IS PROOF THAT FEARS OF FURTHER CUBAN ADVENTURISM IF THEY WERE NOT COUNTERED IN
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ANGOLA WERE WELL FOUNDED. WHETHER OR NOT THE CUBANS

CAN BE SEEN AS ONLY AN EXTENSION OF SOVIET INVOLVEMENT
IS NOT AS IMPORTANT AS THE DIFFICULTIES IN THE FUTURE
SHOULD THE CUBANS BE ABLE TO MAKE A SUCCESS OF THEIR
INVOLVEMENT IN THE HORN.

8. IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO GET THE VIEWS OF A NUMBER OF
OTHER NON-AFRICAN AND NON-ARAB GOVERNMENTS ON THE
SITUATION. THE ITALIANS, FIRST, PARTICULARLY AS THEY
HAVE INDICATED THEIR CONCERN AND HAVE HAD A LONG-
STANDING INTEREST IN THE REGION. IT MIGHT ALSO BE HELP-
FUL TO TALK TO THE SWEDES, HAVING HAD AN INTEREST IN
ETHIOPIA FOR SOME TIME, AND ALSO THE CHINESE WHO ARE NOW
BACKING THE SOMALIS IN A LIMITED WAY. AND AS THE
FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE ARAB LEAGUE ARE MEETING ON
NOV 12, PERHAPS IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO ASK THAT THEY
CONSIDER THE SITUATION AND, IF POSSIBLE, MAKE SOME SORT
OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

9. ON RE-READING THIS I FIND THAT I HAVE LEFT OUT
CONSIDERATION OF ANY OF THE PRINCIPLES WHICH ARE AT
STAKE. IF WE ARE FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE PRINCIPLE
OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AS DEFINED BY COLONIAL BOUN-
DARIES AND THAT OF SELF-DETERMINATION OF PEOPLES, I
THINK THAT WE ARE BETTER OFF IN COMING DOWN ON THE SIDE
OF SELF-DETERMINATION. IDEALISM ASIDE, NATIONALISM IS
AND PROBABLY WILL REMAIN A VERY POTENT FORCE, AND IN
THIS CONFLICT, I THINK IT LIKELY THAT THE SOMALIS WILL,
ULTIMATELY, WIN. BEING ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS IS
OK, BUT BACKING A WINNER AT THE SAME TIME IS EVEN
BETTER.

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